

8 April of the Year One, A.N.
Torino, Via Carlo Alberto 6, III^e étage
1600 Hours

What does Overbeck see when he bursts through the door of Davide Fino's salon? The theologian's lantern jaw lights the way to his god. Yet what does Overbeck actually find there? A madman in the church, perhaps? The basilica floor of cracked marble tile, walls of tatty satin yellowed by the jaundiced century, wan afternoon light piercing oblique from high windows overhead. Far off in a corner of the sanctuary, cowering on sagging crimson cushions, a blind spider reading pageproofs. Squatting and squinting. Is this what Overbeck sees? A spider? Or does he see his god?

Oh, the tears they weep! Oh, the embrace! Neither can stand erect, each falls upon the other, the man of god and the man of divinity. Overbeck still smells of train, of chill and engine oil, eighteen eternal hours distant from Basel. The god knows that Overbeck will take him back in tow. Basel was the scene of his first ascension, his elevation to a university professorship; it will be the perfect port of embarkation for the longest journey ever undertaken by man or god.

They collapse onto the sofa, try to speak, seek the words that will make it all seem less terrible, less awful.

—Professor Burckhardt sent me. He got your letter.

—But didn't *you* get my letters, Franz?

—Yes. Yes, of course. But it was Burckhardt who finally understood.

Overbeck is too embarrassed, too awestruck to go on. Altogether too overwrought. And the god is too touched to reply. After all, Overbeck is his friend, the only faithful one, after all these years of failed friendships.

The god remembers the letter in question word-for-word, as though Professor Burckhardt were reading it back to him here and now, declaiming it from his lectern in the Aula of the University. As Burckhardt he reads it while as Overbeck he roots for words to say to himself

To Jacob Burckhardt in Basel

Turin, January 6, 1889

My dear Professor,

In the end I'd far rather be a Basel professor than God; but I didn't dare push my personal egoism so far as to neglect the creation of the world. As you know, one has to make sacrifices, wherever and however one lives.—Nevertheless, I've reserved a small furnished room for myself here, a student's room, across the street from the Palazzo Carignano (where, as Vittorio Emanuele, I was born); in addition, from my writing table I can hear the splendid music they are making below in the Galleria Subalpina. I pay 25 francs, including service, I buy my tea and all my own provisions myself, I suffer the misfortune of bootsoles the worse for wear, and I thank heaven every minute for this *old* world, for whose sake human beings have never been simple and silent enough.—Because I've been condemned to entertain the eternity to come with bad jokes, I've set up a writer's shop here that leaves really nothing to be desired, quite pretty it is, and not at all taxing. The post office is five paces from here; I myself drop off my despatches to the *nonpareil* literary journalists of the *grand monde*. I am of course in most intimate contact with *Figaro*, and just so you get an inkling of how harmless I am, listen now to the first of my two bad jokes:

Don't let the Prado case unnerve you. I am Prado; I am also Father Prado; I daresay I am also Lesseps. . . . I wanted to grant my Parisians, whom I love, a new concept—that of a decent criminal. I am Chambige as well—he, too, a decent criminal.

Second joke. I greet the Immortal Monsieur Daudet who belongs to the forty.

Astu.

Astu? As-tu compris? He can explain everything, really, even if at first it all seems mystifying gobbledegibberish. One thing he knows for certain: Burckhardt's sage gray head, eyes and beak of hawk, comprehends every word of it. Burckhardt sent Overbeck here, Overbeck the theologian, to prepare the way for the god's second coming and sole transfiguration. However, the letter doesn't end with these weak witticisms of Astu. There is now a novel part to the god's epistle, including complimentary close and signatures.

Many signatures. Hoary hawkhead raised, eyes scanning the ceiling, in no need of notes or lectern, he continues the letter:

What is unpleasant and offends my modesty is the fact that at bottom every name in history I am; so it is with the children I have brought into the world—I have to wonder, with some misgivings, whether all those who enter into the Kingdom of Heaven didn't also proceed *out of* God. This past autumn, outfitted as modestly as possible, I twice attended my own interment: first as Count Robilant (—no, Robilant is my son, inasmuch as I am Carlo Alberto, for that is my nature down below), but then Antonelli I was myself. My dear Professor, you should see that tower of his; because I know nothing about the things I create, you have every right to be as critical as you can be, I'm grateful for every criticism, though I can't promise to take advantage of any of them. We artists are incorrigible.—Today I viewed my operetta—a work of Moorish genius—and took the opportunity to establish to my pleasure that both Moscow and Rome are grandiose affairs. You see, no one can deny my talent for landscapes, either.—Think it over, we'll have lovely lovely chats, Torino isn't far, the most serious demands upon your profession lie not too far afield, a glass of Veltliner we shall be able to locate for you. Strictly casual attire is the only decency permitted.

He signed with heartfelt love, thinking Burckhardt would come, certain he would come. After all, how often does the Great Year turn and Greece revive? Burckhardt, chronicler of the greatest civilization and its renaissances, surely he will come yet! For the kairoitic moment he sends a representative of the early Christian community, theology's conscience with a lantern jaw. Yet gods mustn't grumble, it is beneath their station. But O Father Burckhardt how your daimon needs you now! O make haste to help him!

He remembers how they used to frequent that Austrian guest-house, the only one in Basel, just for Burckhardt's beloved Veltliner red, and how when they left at closing time the professor would take a false step in the direction of the ladies in waiting at the Alley of the Defunct, the only place in Basel that was alive, and the rest of them would take him by the arm—actually touching him, grasping his meager flesh!—in order to preserve his chastity.

—My chastity is as rigid as can be, Burckhardt said, and they were panting with laughter, doubled over, tears and hoots abounding, the night they poured a libation to the daimons in the street. No,

not even the Meister, for all his genius and jollity and highly compromised ideality, ever matched dear dear Burckhardt, may the narrator make so bold?

So why has he not come to Turin, Burckhardt himself? *I am old*, he says. *My heart*, he says. *Leave me alone*, he says. *Don't tempt me with your writings, they are beyond me*, he says. Read on, grayhead, glean that letter. It says:

Tomorrow my son Umberto is coming, accompanied by the lovely Lady Margherita, whom I shall receive in my shirtsleeves in this my modest home.

(Malwida told the god to marry money, a nice girl, but rich, then to live in Rome. Lady Margherita of Rome is very rich, as befits a queen. The god's Mama would adjudge her a nice girl, and the god would concur. As always.)

The rest for Frau Cosima... Ariadne... From time to time all is enchantment... I walk about everywhere in my student frock, here and there I slap folks on the shoulder and say, *siamo contenti? son dio, ho fatto questa caricatura...*

I've had Caiphas put in chains; last year I too was crucified by German doctors in the most agonizing way. Wilhelm, Bismarck, and all anti-semites eliminated.

You may make whatever use of this letter you like, just as long as it doesn't diminish the respect in which the people of Basel hold me.—

Silence of the grave.
An eternity passes.
Another commences.
The same.

What have dear dear Overbeck and the god to say to one another when all is said and done? Luckily at this juncture the landlord marches in, His Liegelord Davide, along with daughters Irene and Giulia, son Ernesto, and even the Signora, Donna Candidly Snowwhite, whom they haven't seen for days, she's been hiding out back shirking her work, naughty girl. Ah, Davide, Davide, how you hang your hairless head! You've been to the police, no? Don't blame yourself, Fino, the mill of god grinds exceeding Fino. No one in all Thebes understood what came sweeping down from those smoking hills. Least of all the police. Chief Alfazio put all the questions, didn't he, while the fat sergeant took notes? Is not the narrator right

in saying that Alfazio shook his head and clucked his tongue while the sergeant picked his nose and snorted and recorded:

—How long you been putting up with this loco, Signor Fino?

—It's been three or four days now, you replied, accurately, fairly, who can blame you, certainly not the god.

—And the piano playing, nights?

—Oh, much much longer. Weeks and weeks it's been going on, every night, in the middle of the night. And it isn't real music, no, it isn't beautiful, he's slamming the keyboard with his elbows and shrieking his head off all the while

To Erwin Rohde in Hamburg

Leipzig, October 27, 1868

My dear Friend,

I simply can't bring myself to preserve a cool, critical distance between me and this music. Every fiber of every nerve in me quivers, and I've long not felt such perdurant transport as I feel with the Overture to *Meistersinger*.

Your faithful friend,
F. N.

—Serenades, you say? Lullabies?

—No jokes, please, Chief Alfazio. It's a nightmare. Nobody can sleep, my family, the neighbors, the whole building. The signora hiding out back in the garden shed . . .

—You'll be home this evening at what time? about ten o'clock, eleven?

—Si, Signor Commandante.

—We'll be there. With reinforcements. He won't escape.

—Of course he won't escape, sir, he's a professor. Be gentle with him.

Calling Card to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche in Naumburg

Leipzig, February 12, 1869

Spread the word!

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
Adjunct Professor of Classical Philology
(with a salary of 800 Thaler)
in the University of Basel.

—Ah, yes, a schoolboy gone sour. That's the worst kind, take it from me. Tell your Signora she won't have to hide no more. He won't get away. We are here to help you, at your service, Signor.

O caro Signor Fino! Ah, Davide, Davide! Molto Fino! You think the god does not know what you've been through today, but he does, he knows everything. Omniscience is part of the package. Tell Overbeck. Go ahead, he is a trusted friend, tell him everything. All morning long you tried to get in to see the German Consul. You forgot the god's totem, he's a Pole, a Swiss Pole. Only later did you go to the police. You cooled your heels until the Consul was ready to grant you an audience. He finally deigned to see you, and when you asked him what you should do with a German national who was slipping rapidly not to say careening round the bend he said:

—*Das entzieht sich meiner Kenntniss*. What you ask recedes and withdraws utterly beyond the frontiers of my knowledge and competence.

Whereupon you gave indignant and energetic rejoinder, and right you were to do so:

—I have a madman in my house yelling his head off all night kissing animals out in the street all day scaring my little girls, a crazy man, one of your own, and what I want to know is what are you going to do about it?

At which juncture the Consul pledged a solemn oath that he would in due course make the appropriate inquiries and see to the necessary et ceteras. Whereupon you interjected:

—Listen, if you don't help me I am at the police in five minutes. And you know what they will do? On the outskirts of town we've got a *manicomio*, maybe a dozen of them, and your countryman could disappear for a millennium or two, you understand me, he is not *my* crazy! I rent him a room. Up to now he pays regular. But he's not *my* crazy! Giulia and Ernesto are terrified to come home from school, Irene's the only one not frightened out of her wits, she's too much like him, God help her. Her mother, my Candida, hiding out in the garden shed, pretending she's potting plants—in January! she's as potty as he is!—I tell you it's enough, we've had enough, now it's your turn. He tells everybody he's a Pole but his papers are Swiss and I know he's a German!

To Heinrich Köselitz in Venice

Marienbad, August 20, 1880

I'm living here incognito, the most inconspicuous of patients: in the sanatorium's registry I am listed as "Mr. Nietzsche,

teacher.” There are many Poles here and they all—it is astonishing—take me to be a Pole, hail me with Polish greetings, and when I reveal that I am a Swiss, well, they don’t believe me. One of them took his leave of me, quite forlorn, with the remark: “He *is clearly* of the Polish race, but his heart has wandered God knows where.”

Faithfully yours,
FN.

The Consul swore he’d do his level best with all deliberate speed—tell us, Davide, was he tall, blond, blue-eyed, and abysmally stupid? Yes, you were in the right building. What a day you’ve had! Were the god still mortal he’d be mortified. But you came home to find friend Overbeck already there, having come all the way from Basel, and now all will go smoothly, rest assured. Overbeck will tell everyone what is to be done. It is hard for you, of course, you’ve never had divinity in your home. Fino you may be, Sophocles you are not.

To Cosima von Bülow in Tribschen

Basel, Sunday, July 19, 1870

Most esteemed Baroness,

I understand what it means that the Athenians felt able to erect altars to their Aeschylus and their Sophocles and to bestow on the latter the heroic name Δεξιόν, as one who received and entertained the gods in his home. The fact that the gods *were there* in the house of the genius arouses that religious feeling I was telling you about.

Faithfully and devotedly yours,
F. N.

Yet it is harder for the daimon, who has never been a god before. He doesn’t know what to expect from moment to moment, doesn’t know which way to wend. Overbeck on the sofa beside him, himself on the other side of himself. He can’t get over it, is beside himself with joy, all the heavens jubilate. Yet Overbeck will know exactly what they are to do. Retrieve your candid signora from the shed, Davide, it must be freezing out there. The god will not frighten her. Look at him: cool as a cucumber, mild as a mortal. Sh! Mum’s the word. What’s that you say? Another bromide? Yes, thanks. Nothing

better, bromide, elixir of Bromios the Thunderer. Fetch the glass from the table. Better than Barbera. Settles the nerves. The god's had a rough one himself. There now, he feels fit as a fiddle.

—Overbeck, shall I play for you?

Caught by surprise, not knowing what to expect, Overbeck smiles uneasily. He misses Fino's desperate signal, for Fino would dissuade Overbeck.

—Yes, of course. I'm glad you're still playing. Music hath charms . . .

They rise and walk slowly in procession down the hall to the ancient instrument in the sanctum sanctorum. The god loves the sound of his booted heels on the vestibule floor, he gives a little shuffle and click-clack. Evil whisperings behind him, he can hear them. *Maledizione, gran Madre di Dio, che facciamo? O my people, put away your troubles and your tremblings, your god is as sedate as a sedan, he shall scarcely touch the keys, he shall dance—Zarathustra is a dancer—and soar ever so legato. He settles onto the ruined leather of the ancient tripod, as his Father did before him, beneath him. In the bosom of the Father. Something comes over him. He feels the thunderstorm rolling down the sky. He plays. Rather, it plays in him.*

And I beg the storm to come. Doesn't the pealing of bells attract lightning? Now, so close, O storm: purify me, cleanse me, let fragrant rain drench my dull nature. Welcome! Welcome at last! Behold! first blast of lightning, you make my inmost heart quiver, and from it streams a long hazy wisp of fog heavenward. Do you know it, so gloomy, so guileful? Already my eye blazes brighter, and my hand rises against the fog in order to curse it. Thunder growls. A voice resounds: Be purified!

One reverberant chord on the very edge of dissonance, then another over the edge. Infinite pause. The resonance ebbs as infinity passes. Another ringing chord, farther beyond the verge, well over the edge, far down the precipice. Another infinite interruption, trailing off to silence. The god used to insist on melodic line and counterpoint all the way, the very essence of music. Yet now he dotes on the chord, the instantaneous vertical synthesis, the full harmonic spectrum in one sharp blast of thunderous sound dashing all linear essences!

Dull, humid air: my heart swells. Nothing stirs. Then a gentle breeze, the grass in the meadow trembles—I bid you welcome, alleviative, redemptive rain. Here is wilderness, void, death; disseminate afresh!

*Behold! a second bolt! Glaring, two-edged, into my heart!
And a voice resounds: Hope!*

Yet another chord. Yet another eternity passes.

Then a mild musk wafts over the earth, a wind flutters toward us, a storm on its heels, howling, hunting its prey. Leaves plucked from branches it chases ahead of itself. Rain swims after the storm, drunk with joy.

Right through the heart! Windstorm and rain! Lightning and thunder! Right through the heart! And a voice resounds: Renew yourself!!

Would one dare look up to see the rapt gaze and the astonishment on Overbeck's face? He is expecting Wagner. Brahms. Schumann, "The Broken Windowpane." Liszt, O liszt! But he shall hear something out of the ordinary. Come, fingers. Come, Father, let the god feel your breath in his ear, stir the hair on the nape of his neck. Guide those fingers, O Father!

Overbeck and the god, alone in the basilica. The god hopes that Overbeck doesn't see the disheveled bed. Pandemonium of all toiletries, medicines, hairbrush, and bootjack—all will soon be dancing off

To Franziska Nietzsche in Naumburg

Pforta, October 6, 1858

Dear Mother!

Straightway today, the very first day of my life at Pforta, I'm writing you, and I'd have lots to tell, but for lack of time I'll save it until we meet in Almrich on Sunday. Up to now I'm feeling quite well, but what does "quite well" mean when you're in a strange place?! I've met a few fellows here. . . . Generally speaking, I'll feel more at home after a while, but it'll take a long time.—

Won't Lisbeth write sometime, since she's got more time than I do. You must all be very busy with the move, and therefore you have no time to think much about me. Well, then, when we're all settled in, we'll want to visit one another often.—Lots of greeting to Lisbeth, Aunt Rosalie, Auntie Rieke, Aunt Lina, and to Wilhelm and Gustav and everyone else who remembers me. More next time.

Your,
Fr. W. Nietzsche.
Alumnus portensis etc.

1. N.B.

My bootjack:

I need it desperately.

2. N.B.

Why don't you send me

a little box of

wafers.

It finally looks like a proper temple now that Ernesto's prints have been stripped from the walls. Concentrate, keep those thighs still, close that mouth, seal it on both sides, fight the grimace that is coming to stretch it at the corners until the lips split and salt tears flow into the cuts with briny burning saline sting.

Overbeck and the god, alone in the temple. *Pubblico sceltissimo*. The last living Christian, the first since Christ, and the jester of eternities to come, together at last! The god hears his followers approach, his women slim of ankle, high-breasted, dancers all, chanting the dithyramb ululate:

—Euhoi, euhoi! Evohe, Bromios! Iakhe! Iakhe Bakhe! Ika-Ika-Bäh-Bäh! Brekkekekex-koax-koax!

—Come, Zagreus, Lord Dionysos, come!

—Lord of ivy, come!

—Thyrsos-bearer, Σωτήρ, savior of the world, come!

—Come! For you are near!

Thighs of god, keep still. Not yet. No poise and leap, not just yet. Fingers shall dance all alone. All together altogether alone. Skill. Technique. Science of operetta transposed to pure music, refined in the extreme, the most intelligent enthusiasm, splendor without a hint of sentimentality, everything in filigrane, psychologically psective, Pied Pipers piping, *piramidale successo*, pardon the Egyp-ticism. Now! Again! Eternity! *Da capo, da capo!* Dance!

To Heinrich Köselitz in Venice

Nizza, November 24, 1887

Dear Friend,

This morning I am enjoying an *enormous* benefit: for the first time a "fire idol" stands in my room—a tiny stove—and I confess that I have already performed a few heathenish hops around it. Up to now it's been frosty blue fingers, and even my philosophy failed to be on its best footing.

Your friend, N.

Overbeck cannot believe his eyes and ears. He wants to approach the daimon but does not dare. It is the aura that enwraps divine flesh, the precipitate nudity of daimonic meat, the elevation of the god's simple slender cat's eye and delicate slit of mouth reaching up to heaven. Overbeck has always dreamed of seeing these things, but he never truly believed he would. It is the thump of naked heels and soles on the chilly marble floor, as long ago on Cithaeron, the cold does not affect him, Sanctus Januarius dances with him, it is the distended toes that repel poor Overbeck, one can see that. Probably he has never seen unshod feet before, the tiny black hairs sprouting across the knuckles of immortal toes revolt him. He can see those hairs each time the god pauses to pirouette. On the highstep all is a blur and he can make out only the sacred processional part, modeled and scarified down its sacred sides. With niches. Each niche concealing a figure of the god. A daimonic figure concealed in each nook and cranny of the rod of god. Overbeck cannot see the figures in the niches of the shaft, he can see nothing at all with his hands over his eyes like that. Pipes timbrels bells tambouras flutes kettledrums and oboes deafen him, he thinks it is Fasnet, he is afraid for his wife, and well he might be! It is death to look on the dancer with cold eye and fishy feet. Will the women tolerate his presence? Even the god will not be able to soothe and assuage them once all are caught in the dance.

Again the god invites Overbeck. Don't be afraid. It will be enough if you touch him. Take his hand. Don't be afraid of the thyrsos, the ivy-wound fennel stalk will not strike you. See how it waves and bobs in the air, plunging and rising with each spring and leap of these prancing feet! See the luxuriant ivy! How it curls and adorns the belly of god! Do not be afraid. No one is more modest than the rigid godhead, the very figure of shame. Come dance with the god. Come. Take you and eat. Don't just chew, swallow. Don't just swallow, listen and learn.

—I am the child of Zeus. Borne back to Theban ground, come home to the land of my nativity. Dionysos, son of Cadmus's daughter Semele, the maid midwifed by fire and lightning. Be renewed! I here, this one, whose form is that of a mortal, godhead disguised, I am come home, behold the man, "Εἶπω home, present here and now on this ground of smoldering smoking maidenhead. Semele! O my Mother! Great Mother Kybele! Kypris! Smoke betrays fire. Remember her. She will recur. With horns upon her head. Io!

Premier among all the cities of the Hellenes, Torino now resounds with the ecstatic cries of the women *ololuoloujah! ololuoloujah!* He clasps the fawnskin about their tremulous shoulders

and places the ivied javelin in their hands. They are come to refute the calumny against his Mother, the slur spread by his Father's sisters . . .

—You mean your *mother's* sisters: Ino, Autonoë, and, most terrible of all, spiked Agave.

—No, my mother's sisters were harmless, they were loyal to the crown. I mean Aunt Rosalie, Aunt Auguste, Aunt Lina, and Auntie Rieke. Not to mention Grossmama Erdmuthe, salt of the earth.

To Erdmuthe Nietzsche in Naumburg

Pobles, June 1, 1850

My good Grossmama!

Just a few words today, since my dear Mother has little time. We are all well and every day I go to school where Grosspapa gives us lessens. I hope you al stay well too and that you think of me who sends lots of

Love,
Fritz Nietzsche

The women had no right to slander her. It was sheer jealousy. They said that Dionysos was not the son of god, that Semele had been nymphomaniacized by a mortal maleman, reamed in mortal rut, that she then proclaimed Zeus the proud father of her little oversight. For their offense I have driven the rachitic sisters mad, tickled their fancies, addled their brains, routed them out of their homes, harried and herded them like Argive cows to the mountains. There they wander like lunatics, dressed in the rags of my rites. All the seed of Cadmus, all the womanseeds, loosed from their hearths, lost to their looms, expelled from all memory of who they are or what they used to be, out of sight out of mind, ἐξιστεμένα. They will never know the gadfly that stung them, but I shall vindicate my Mother.

—Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive . . .

To Franziska Nietzsche in Merseburg

Pforta, Monday, 25 August 1862

Dear Mama!

For the love of God these fatal headaches are killing me again: I've been in the infirmary for a week now. The doctor has advised me and given me official permission to go back to

Naumburg and undertake my walking and hiking cures. So I'll be leaving for Naumburg on Monday at noon; I'll stay in our lodgings there, leading the quietest of lives, without a trace of music or any other stimulus. . . . Don't worry, dear Mama, because if I manage to avoid everything that can excite me, the headaches will diminish; but I think I'll stay away a bit longer, so that I can eradicate them root and stem.

Loving you with all my heart,
Your FWNietzsche

—They will apologize in their own brutish way, dearest Mother, for all they have ever said or thought against you. And to all mortals I shall appear undisguised, I shall radiate in full presence as I truly am: a daimon sired engendered spawned procreated and partured by the great god Zeus alone.

—Alone? Then Semele did not bear you?

—Onward, my women! On and on! I, the twice-born god led you out of Asian Naumburg through Basel in Lydia over Tmolus and Gotthard to Thebes. Come and beat your tympanum, pummel the Phrygian kettledrum, sear Rhea's sacred skins and mine. Let it pound at the palace doors of King Pentheus! Give him to know why he bears the name of Mourning and of Grief!

Two knocks at the front entrance of Fino's flat. Two knocks, four. Who could that be? At this hour, who in the world could it be? Friends of Fino's, friends or fiends of Fino's, no doubt. Well, fine!

Never mind! Nobody home! On, my women, while I rejoin the Bacchae in the mountain meadows of Cithaeron! How they whirl and twirl, every girl a whorl of the world in my universe of joy! How they chatter and batter the headsplitting drums! Fondle reverently the verge of god, for it knows no bounds! Gurgle with milk, O earth, bubble with wine, flow with the nectar of honeybees! Sing Dionysos with a barabarabum of drums. To the mountain! To the mountain! Prance like a colt crowding the mare at pasture, lightly leap and frisk and fly! Evohe!

Three knocks at the front door of Fino's flat. Two, three, four knocks. Down the hall scurry all ears, to hover about the threshold. It isn't the god's Father. Strange voices. Gruff voices of gruff men. Interlopers. Overbeck rushes from the god's side, hastens down the hall. Must be friends of his. Friends or fiends of Overbeck's.

One can hear Overbeck's voice now, hushed, urgent; yet not even the narrator can make out what he's saying. Overbeck's Italian is even worse than god's. Wait. Wait. He hears. Now he knows.

They are negotiating his fate while he plays in the garden. Caiphas. Bismarck. The Kaiser in a cast iron straightjacket. Fino takes up the burden now, one can plainly hear the villains of state, with Fino mollifying:

—I know what I told you this afternoon, it's all my fault, this gentleman has come from Switzerland to take him in his charge, it's all arranged . . . yes . . . I'm terribly sorry to have put you . . . no, Sergeant, that was me playing just now . . . here, please, from my cousin, wonderful vintage, you can try it back at the station, of course not, on duty, at home then. . . . Terribly grateful for all your trouble. . . . *Buona notte.*

And so once again the god is saved, to be savior himself elsewhere some other time. It is all too trying. All too exhausting. To bed, to bed!

Thump of heavy boots on the stairway descending. He shall await their return, for everything recurs, but he shall wait in bed. Nothing will budge him he swears it!

To bed! To sleep, to sleep, perchance to awaken!

2359 Hours

Call him Henri. But only if you improve your French. Chambige. Henri Chambige of Colonial Algiers, *à votre service*. Henri fell in love with Mrs Cricket though Mr Cricket demurred. Chirp for Henri, lovely lady of Engellande, O Louise, that he may hear the raspy whisper of your voice as you rub your bare legs together, that he may see the whiteness of your flesh and the roses of your breasts. Your green eyes dart nervously from side to side, you are a cornered animal, magnificent in your terror. You whine at him *If you touch me if I even think you are going to touch me I'm naked before you defenseless* grazing him with those darting eyes on that fatal evening, their last together. Her last altogether. *It has to stop* she said. *You can give me nothing, nothing of this* she said, indicating with one sweeping gesture of one bare alabaster arm the sitting room of the villa, the chandeliers, the curving staircase, the tapestries. All he could think of was how much he had given Mrs Cricket, the gallons of groaning manseed, everywhere upon her without her and within her, and all the waves of seawater she had once lavished on him, and he felt he was drying up desiccating the terrible moment she said those things she shouldn't have said those things her voice suddenly harsh he'd never heard it that way before and it was to stop her from ruining her voice that he fired, first her, then himself. For her he was always the better shot. How unlucky Cham-

bigge survived. And now must play the Parisian part of the decent criminal. The pale criminal, upstanding felon, assassin of a goddess. For the tabloids all over Europe, all the way down to Torino and beyond, a divertissement for the morning coffee, a topic for the afternoon tea. He should have used a knife, should have whispered *te amo* as he introduced it, watching his hand turn carmen crimson, it would have made better theater, gayer music, richer monstrosity.

As it is, people confuse Chambige with his comrade in arms, the Spaniard Prado, who paid her with hard metal instead of true coin. They never would have pinched him if he hadn't burgled. That was mean of him. All the world hates a burglar but loves a ladykiller, if she's a lady of loving trying to earn a decent living. Wrath of God, they call him then. Scourge. Comeuppance. Vengeance is mine, saith El Prado. Monster! And with what style! What theater! Prado was tried and convicted right there in the god's modest domicile, Carlo Alberto 6 III^e, the former Palace of Justice, so that the daimon had a ringside seat.

To August Strindberg in Holte

Torino, via Carlo Alberto 6, III,
December 8, 1888

My dear and distinguished Sir,

Prado excelled beyond his judges, even his advocates, in self-control, esprit, and audacity; nevertheless, the *pressure* of the indictment had brought him so low, physiologically speaking, that some of the witnesses recognized him only by portraits from an earlier time.

In esteem and friendship
Nietzsche, monster.

Yet how could they be certain it was he? Answer: they were not certain. They took the word of that witch. Frogeyes, no chin, lipless mouth, five agglomerated bumps for a nose. That witch cooing morality laid Prado low. Because she could never lay him high. Cooing justice and the rights of woe is man, reveling in her incomparable ugliness. Salivating over Prado's bowed head. Prado was far superior, Father Prado you may call him, Père Strindberg. How happy the god was he was he. And Chambige as well, Henri galant, who loved a lady laved a lady leveled a lady wife; rattled a lady riddled a lady reveled a lady rife. Monster!

TRANSFIGURATION

P.S.: At that very moment the anointed servant of Christ approached on sable satinslippered feet. Father Prado glided across the wooden platform that supported the machine of the shining blade, drew near the pale criminal in order to bestow the final blessing and to wish him godspeed on his journey to hell. The murderous ingrate repulsed him with a sneer:

—I don't need your God. I can find my own way to the slaughterhouse!

Never had the preacher of death seen such a hardened case, such obduracy, such inveterate criminal depravity; never had the plunging guillotine granted the preacher such titillation such divine delectation such sacerdotal satisfaction.

—Sinnnnnggggggkerchunkhh!

To Franziska Nietzsche in Naumburg

Pforta, February 16, 1861

Dear Mama!

I really am fed up with these headaches; they keep coming back and I never get better. The least bit of mental effort causes me pain. And I miss a lot of my lessons, without being able to make up the work. Again today they applied a Spanish flea behind each ear. I don't think it will help.

Your FWN.

9 April of the Year One, A.N.
Torino, Stazione Porta Nuova
1420 Hours

At long last with a pant a heave and a lurch the train pulls out: Salvation Express bound for the Isles of the Blessed.

—Addio, Torino! Bell'Italia, farewell! Oh, the divine broccoli, the ambrosial ossobuchi, the tenderest beef in all the world, oxen of the sun transposed from a lambent Lorrain landscape, and the celestial gelati, oh, mi cioccolato Torinese, addio!

The god is dying of hunger. Both kinds.

—Good-bye, fairest of all the cities that ever harbored god. Ciao, Parco Valentino, with your sylvan paths of secreted lovers!

No more will the god quit his house at break of day, exit onto the Via Carlo Alberto, swing round the corner to the right jauntily down the loggia-lined Via Po all the way to the Piazza Vittorio Veneto, across the buzzing piazza to the Lungo Po, swerving right

again down to the Ponte Umberto, O my King and Consort! pardon the shirtsleeves! Nevermore will he cross the Ponte Vittorio held spellbound by that great bronze teat bared to the brazen sky, the vast rotunda of La Gran Madre di Dio. *Great Mother of God!* he shouted the first time he saw it, lurching left beyond good and evil, the river now too on his left spotted with tiny green dots of islands, not a soul on them, not a fleck, the god walking on his Po, no mean feat, until he arrived at the Parco Michelotti. Avenues of plane trees, oaks, limes, and yews, sprinkled with umbrella pines. And one towering fir. His bench beneath it. Where Pentheus met his Mum, where Zagreus gave of himself unstintingly. At the far end of the avenue, in full view beyond the trees, the snowladen Alps of Aosta. The mountains await their god—but they shall behold him no more! Ah, the bittersweet paradoxes of theology!

—Good-bye to you, San Lorenzo, you alone clasp to your stony bosom the veridical veronical veil of the Crucified. You alone—along with thirty-seven of your brethren on this pious and avid italianate soil.

Shall the god go and claim that bloody rag for himself? Shall he condescend to be comforted in his travail before he quits the city forever? No. No crown of thorns, no Lumpenproletariat, no proud woman's face behind the savior's. On this most festive of all occasions let the bells peal and crack, let the organs swell, belch, and fart. Let San Lorenzo turn over a new leaf, medium-rare, sing us a rare new song.

—Torino, you metaphysical city! How splendid you look from atop that tower—the motley member of the Mole Antonelliana, synagogue temple and tower in one, the perfect erectile projectile ejaculate—your corsi, your loggie, your piazze, your sinuous rivers converging beneath supernal Superga, your hills frosted green in the distance. Torino, good-bye!

The god hasn't had a single headache since he arrived in Turin this past September, if it was September. By what reckoning? Whose era? He has not vomited. He is not yet entirely blind. The sidewalks are smooth. He has not stumbled. He must be *causa sui* . . .

And as Bromios departs from the city in a first-class ferrocarrilious cabin, lo, a massive earthquake strikes in two successive rapid-fire seismic convulsions of the grandest proportions.

To Reinhardt von Seydlitz in Munich

Nice, Thursday, February 24, 1887
rue des Ponchettes 29, au premier

Nice has just had its long international Carneval (with Spanish ladies at the forefront, incidentally), and hard on its heels, six hours after its final Girandola, even rarer and more novel existential excitements. For we are now living in the interesting expectation of *perishing*—thanks to a well-meaning earthquake which has everyone here baying at the moon, and not just the dogs. What a pleasure it is when these ancient houses rattle over our heads like coffee grinders! when the inkwell suddenly becomes independent! when the streets fill with horrified half-clothed figures and shattered nervous systems! That very night, between 2 and 3 A.M., like the *gaillard* I am, I made my inspection tour throughout the various quarters of the city, in order to see where the consternation was greatest—for the population was camping out-of-doors day and night: there was something refreshingly military about it. And then the hotels! where a great deal had simply collapsed and full-scale panic prevailed as a consequence. I located all my acquaintances, male and female, found them huddled miserably under green trees; they were wearing their flannels, for it was bitter cold, and with even the slightest tremor they were brooding on The End. I don't doubt that this will bring the season to a precipitate close! Everyone is thinking of *departure* (provided one can get away, and the railroad lines are not all "torn up.") Yesterday evening the guests at the hotel where I eat could not be coaxed to take their *table d'hôte* inside the building—they ate and drank outside; and apart from an elderly and very pious woman who was convinced that Our Dear Lord *dare* not do her any harm, mine was the only *cheerful* countenance among the tragic masks and "heaving bosoms."

Truly,
Your Nietzsche

The Richter Scale capitulates and is no judge before them. Meanwhile, the resplendent sun of the languid Pacific isles suffers total eclipse. Countless mortals, bedazzled and benumbed by these meteorological wonders, fearful of what might next come creeping

To Emily Fynn in St. Moritz

Nice (France), rue des Ponchettes 29
circa March 4, 1887

The entire event was extremely interesting—and even more

absurd: it was neither more nor less dangerous than, say, a trip on a *train rapide* at night.

Your obedient servant,
Prof. Dr. Nietzsche.

out of the desert or sweeping down from the Lydian mountains, take their very lives into their own hands, bringing them to an abrupt and tragic close: an epidemic of suicides, ringing out the old, ringing in the new. Such are the ways of god. And what everyone has expected has not come to pass.

—Torino, addio! I came unto my own and my own received me with utmost delicacy of feeling and respect. How is it that now, at parting, they know me not? Am I that changed? Under the pressure of my trial?

The new stature and status, the unaccustomed dignity, has transformed the god's figure and affected his footfall: a moment ago he sauntered down the quai of the station with a divine bearing, with a godly carriage, only lightly listing to starboard, δεξιός. And the crowds! He yearned to embrace each and every creature, women, men, girls and boys, bushes, dogs, and dray horses, but the Stranger prevented him. Twice he and Overbeck held the god back, pinned his arms in order to preserve his incognito and guarantee their own safety in the throng of onlookers. When gods arrive in the flesh, dangers abound.

Overbeck is now prostrate in the seat across from god, the Stranger on the daimon's left. How fortunate they have the cabin to themselves! Less luck than stratagem, however. Whenever someone threatens to enter and interrupt their intimacy the Stranger slips a prosthesis over the teeth of his upper jaw: gigantic enamel choppers jut from his gaping mouth, his lips stretch taut around these horrid canines and cyclopic cuspids, with a grinding grunting noise he greets the would-be interlopers:

—*Buon giorno! Buona sera! Veni 'qua, dolcetta di me vita! Buona notte!*

Never have you seen people turn tail and disappear with such alacrity, it is all the narrator can do to suppress veritable howls of laughter! The Stranger! He's such a panic! and so effective! All through the journey they will have the cabin to themselves. No one will even notice the god's hairnet, no one will be rude about his snood.

The Stranger dispenses Energy Tablets to keep up the daimon's strength for the journey: Torino Vercelli Novara a layover thank God

not Savona everyone gets lost there Milano Como Chiavenna Chiasso Chur Lugano Bellinzona Gottardo Luzern Zürich Muttenz bei Basel eighteen hours Overbeck says and he should know. Overbeck. Looks like death on a holiday. He has been unwell all this past summer, couldn't write, not even letters. The long silence frightened the god: his last friend lost to him! Dionysos doubted. For shame!

The Stranger will be their guide, the toothy savior of saviors. Something presses the god's eyelids together, his feet won't obey the dance, and if he sits any deeper in that horsehair (the god quakes no horses) he'll never rise again. When Overbeck and the Stranger talk it is in hushed tones, in order not to break the daimonic concentration. It is as though they were speaking at the bottom of a well. Eighteen hours! And when they arrive they'll be swept away to reception after reception. Fancy dress balls gala concerts dedications inaugurations speeches kissing babes in arms aching feet how will they bear it! The Stranger has seen to it all. That was kind of him. Who is he, anyway?

—He am I who am I. Σωτήρ. Dionysos. Zagreus. Zeus the Father (*le Père, toujours le Père, eheu, Strindberg, divorçons?*) sired him, but not on Semele, for her smoking rooms were blasted by divinity. No, Zeus sired Zagreus on Persephone, the spouse of his brother, Hades the Cockscrow cuckolded. Persephone, Queen of Hell, Deathmother of Dionysos-Zagreus, the god devoured by Titans. Fragmented by Titanic teeth and diluted by Titanic spit, masticated into Titanic chyle, adsorbed by Titanic capillaries, beshat as Titanic shit, washed into the soil by winter rainwater, soaked up by the ivy sucked up by the vine. Ivy. Vine. Scions of Dionysos-Zagreus, creeping along beneath Titanic heel and hoe. Biding time until the languorous spring, hiding in the thigh of Zeus until holy lent and the soursweet smell of yellowgreen leaves and grass bid them both come! Ivy and vine, stir, surge, and thrust!

Who is he? The Stranger?

Then the god remembered that the Stranger was a dentist. The time he lost that enormous filling in St. Moritz. Or when he went to Florence with six hollow teeth for Dr. Martyrdom to fill: good name for a dentist. The Stranger. Another good name. For a sophist, for a man of disguises. He likes pulling teeth, or teasing them out, says he studied orthodontics at Philadelphia University in the Americas. A dentist yanking teeth or a psychiatrist snatching souls, either one, the god cannot remember, Energy Tablets notwithstanding. And then he recalled the Dental Council of Basel, the *concilium subalpinum*. The god told the Stranger what had happened to the women of the Canton, thinking he would be scandalized: